

Eating Well at Work: Healthier Food at Potlucks and Special Events

Offering healthier foods at work events makes sense. The County Board of Supervisors encourages healthy food options at work as stated in the County's [Employee Health and Wellness Policy](#). Healthier employees are more productive and have lower health care costs -- everyone benefits in the long run.

There is no need to eliminate all your favorite foods at special occasions. Having options is the key. Include some lighter, healthier alternatives. In fact, you can send your recipes to the [Wellness Program](#) for suggestions on making healthy substitutions that turn old-time favorites into healthier versions that are just as tasty.

Healthy Ideas for "Goodie Days" and Celebrations

"Goodie Days" are often set up in common areas and can become a distressing gauntlet of rich food hard to avoid by co-workers trying to limit their calorie and fat intake. Consider combining all birthdays into a "once a month" celebration or brainstorm for non-food ways to celebrate.

If you do serve food, make sure to always have a fresh fruit or vegetable option available. Here are some ideas on including lighter fare:

Cut the Cake: At office birthday parties consider angel food cake with fresh fruit toppings instead of the usual fat-laden cakes. Smaller portions save calories and fat. Cut smaller pieces of cake or serve mini cookies and brownie bites so attendees can choose their own smaller portion.



Here is an example of what one department did to make goodies **healthier and fun!**

✓ [CEO-Strawberry Shortcake Employee Birthdays Celebration](#)

Compare:

Fresh Strawberry Shortcake (above recipe), 1 serving	154 calories	4 grams fat
Frosted Birthday Cake (1/8 standard round cake)	250-400 calories	10-15 grams fat

Pass the Ice Cream: Try low fat ice cream or frozen yogurt, topped with granola and real fruit for a healthier treat. (Thawed frozen strawberries make an easy healthy topping). Include a truly low-calorie treat with a "float" made from 1 scoop of low fat ice cream and diet root beer.

Compare these choices:

Food	Calories	Fat grams
Regular Root Beer Float (regular ice cream and root beer)	280	12
Diet Float with low fat ice cream ½ cup light ice cream (ex: Dreyer's Slow Churned ½ fat) Diet root beer (ex: Diet A & W root beer)	120	4.5
Sundae with chocolate syrup, nuts and whipped cream	470	25
Sundae with strawberries, low-fat ice cream and granola	230	6

Ditch "Donut Day": Regular donuts and pastries are loaded with fat and calories! Instead of a donut or pastry day, bring mini-bagels, mini low fat muffins and scones with flavored low-fat cream cheese, hummus, and/or jam. Check out the calorie and fat savings below.

Food	Calories	Fat
Bagel		
3-1/2" (grocery store: 2.5 ounces)	194	1
4-1/2 inches (bakery: 5 ounces)	440	3
Mini bagel	71	0
Cream cheese		
Regular (1 ounce; 2 Tablespoons)	98	10
Low fat (1 ounce; 2 Tablespoons)	65	5
Eggplant Hummus (2 Tablespoons)	45	3
Light laughing cow cheese (1 triangle)	35	2
Jam (1 Tablespoons)	56	0
Glazed donut (4-1/2")	299	14
Krispy Kreme Jelly donut	330	17
Starbucks cranberry orange muffin	410	20
Mini blueberry muffin	70	3
Starbucks large pumpkin scone	480	15
Mini scone	170	6



Healthier Potlucks



Potlucks are a great way for workers to show off their culinary expertise and create camaraderie among staff. Make potlucks fun for everyone by having some healthier food choices available.

Challenge co-workers to try new dishes with less calories and fat. Check out the lighter recipes at Cooking Light (<http://www.cookinglight.com/cooking/>).

Consider re-making your favorites into healthier lower-fat dishes. Some simple substitutions can make old-time favorites healthier and just as tasty. See the example of "[Mom's Mexican Chicken](#)".

Send your favorite recipes to the [Wellness Program](#) for suggested modifications.

Since you never know what might show up at a potluck, pass around a sign-up sheet with indications for healthy options. Offer suggestions for fresh fruit (salads or kebabs), raw vegetable plates and salads. Picking up ready-made vegetable platters and fruit plates can be a time-saving option for the busy co-worker or the person who doesn't like to cook.

"Salad bar" potluck: Here's an idea for a different kind of potluck. Assign everyone to bring one item: sliced cucumbers, chopped celery, grape tomatoes, cauliflowerettes, broccoli tops, baby carrots, sprouts, canned garbanzo and kidney beans, shredded low-fat cheese, whole wheat mini pitas or small whole grain rolls, and an assortment of low-fat salad dressings. Arrange lettuce in 1 to 2 large bowls and set up your own salad bar on a couple of long tables. A crock pot of low-fat soup or chili adds a heartier touch.



Below is an example of what one County Department did to make food healthier and fun!

✓ [HSA-Gourmet Salad Bar Luncheon](#)

Tostada Bar potluck: There are probably several co-workers who make "world famous" beans or meat toppings. Encourage everyone else to pitch in with fresh shredded lettuce, chopped tomatoes, low-fat shredded cheese, low-fat sour cream, diced avocados or guacamole, several kinds of salsas, fat-free or no-fat pot beans, 100% whole wheat flour tortillas, and small corn tostada shells. Be sure to include fresh fruit for dessert along with more traditional sweets. Make an "exotic" fresh fruit salad with fresh pineapple, kiwis, berries and melons in season topped with grated fresh coconut.

BBQ's: Office BBQs set in local parks are a great way to get together and encourage physical activity. Arranging games seems a natural for most party planner, but be sure to include some healthier food selections, too. Offer baked chips, fresh fruit and vegetable plates with low-fat dip, green salad with low or no-calorie dressing choices, low fat hot dogs (ex: *Healthy Choice*®) or turkey burgers, Veggie Burgers (ex: *Boca*® burgers) and 100% whole wheat buns.

Healthy Options for Catered Meetings and Special Events



Healthy eating is balanced eating. Healthy eating does not mean that *everything* you serve has to be low-fat, low-salt, low-sugar and high fiber. Just make sure that you offer *more* choices that are healthy and *fewer* choices that are not.

Healthy foods are beautiful, appetizing, delicious, and satisfying. There are many healthy and tasty options for foods and beverages at special events. Resolve to offer at least some healthier options:

- Fruits and vegetable plates with low fat dips are healthy and beautiful. Grilled and roasted vegetables are so tasty they don't need butter or sauces.
- Baked, roasted or grilled meats and fish are delicious alternatives to fatty and cheese-laden casseroles and lasagna. Avoid breaded, fried, and "stuffed" main dishes. Try a vegetarian entrée.
- Offer smaller portions of rich entrees, appetizers and desserts. This cuts down on calories and fat—and "mini" portions can be fun and attractive, too.

See the tables below for specific suggestions on healthier choices for breakfasts, lunches, dinners, snacks and receptions.



Suggestions for Healthier Choices

CHOOSE . . .	INSTEAD OF . . .
For Beverages	
water- (plain spring water or flavored carbonated with no sugar), coffees or teas, including decaffeinated and herbal teas 100% fruit or vegetable juices	soda pop fruit flavored drinks
low-fat or skim milk	whole or 2% milk
For Breakfasts	
fresh fruits, dried fruits, unsweetened juices	sweetened canned fruits juices
non-fat or light yogurt	regular yogurt
small bagels - 3-1/2" or smaller	regular bagels
small or mini muffins - 2-1/2" or smaller	regular or large muffins
100% whole grain bagels or muffins low-fat, whole grain and nut granola bars	croissants donuts sweet rolls, pastries
toppings of light trans-free margarine or butter low-fat cream cheese jam or jelly nut butters like almond or peanut butter	regular butter margarines with trans fat regular cream cheese
unsweetened cold cereals instant hot cereals (no sugar added)	sweetened cereals flavored and sweetened instant hot cereals
whole grain waffles and French toast	waffles or French toast made from white bread
lean ham or Canadian bacon vegetarian sausage or bacon substitutes	bacon or sausage

CHOOSE . . .	INSTEAD OF . . .
For Lunches or Dinners	
salads with dressings on the side	salads with added dressing
low-fat or fat-free salad dressings	regular salad dressings
soups made with vegetable puree or skim milk	soups made with cream or half and half
pasta, vegetable or tofu salads with low-fat dressing	salads made with mayonnaise or cream dressing
sandwiches on 100% whole grain bread, pita, or wraps	sandwiches on croissants or white bread
lean meats , poultry, fish, tofu low-fat cold cuts (3 g fat/oz) water-packed tuna or salmon	high-fat meats (such as ribs or brisket), poultry with skin high fat cold cuts, salami, pepperoni, sausage, bacon oil-packed tuna or salmon
grilled, baked, or broiled meat, poultry, or fish	fried meats
marinated meats, poultry, or fish	rich cream and cheese sauces or gravies
low-fat cheeses (less than 6 grams of fat per ounce)	regular cheeses
tomato-based sauces	cream, butter or cheese sauces
baked potatoes with low-fat or vegetable toppings	baked potatoes with butter, sour cream, and bacon bits
steamed vegetables	cooked vegetables in cream sauce or butter
100% whole grain breads or rolls	croissants or white rolls
margarine without trans-fatty acids	margarines with trans fat
mustard, catsup, and light mayonnaise	regular mayonnaise or rich sauces
lower fat and calories desserts: fresh fruit, fruit salad, low-fat ice cream, low-fat frozen yogurt, sherbet, sorbet, angel food cake with fruit topping	higher fat and calories desserts: ice cream, cheese cake, pies, cream puffs, large slices of cake, fruit tarts, pie, cobbler
Appetizers or Snacks for Receptions	
fresh vegetables, cut up low-fat dressing, salsa or tofu dip	tempura or deep fat fried vegetables creamy high fat dressings or cheese dips
cut up fresh fruits and vegetables	chips or cookies
low-fat, "lite" popcorn (5 g fat or less/serving)	regular popcorn or buttered popcorn
whole grain crackers (5 g fat or less/serving)	regular crackers
dips made of salsa, low-fat cottage cheese, hummus or low-fat salad dressings	dips made from regular mayonnaise, sour cream, cream cheese or cheese sauce
baked or low-fat chips, pretzels (less than 7 grams of fat per oz)	regular chips
grilled or broiled chicken brochettes without skin	fried chicken, chicken with skin
miniature fruit or vegetable kebabs	kebabs with chicken liver, bacon, or high fat meats fatty BBQ ribs
miniature meatballs made with lean meat	large meatballs made of high-fat meat, meatballs served in gravy or high-fat sauces
broiled or poached seafood: shrimp, salmon, scallops,	deep fat fried seafood, seafood in high-fat sauces

CHOOSE . . .	INSTEAD OF . . .
oysters, clams	
mushroom caps with low-fat bread-based stuffing	mushrooms with high-fat cheese stuffing or mushrooms marinated in oil
miniature vegetable pizzas with tomato sauce and light cheese	pizza with pepperoni, Italian sausage or other high-fat meats
vegetable sushi rolls or vegetable spring rolls - fresh, not fried	egg rolls or fried spring rolls
small cubes of cheese (3/4" squares or smaller)	large cubes of cheese
raw or roasted, unsalted nuts	salted nuts or sugar-coated nuts like beer nuts

